

July 9, 1998

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DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION
DOCKET SECTION
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Docket Clerk
U.S. DOT Dockets
Room PI-401
400 Seventh Street SW
Washington, DC 20590-0001

RE: Docket # FHWA-97-2979 -22

To Whom It May Concern:

I am contacting you at the request of Missouri Attorney General, Jay Nixon regarding my experience and concerns with the moving industry. In February of last year I enlisted the help of North American Van Lines to move me from my apartment in Northridge, CA to a home in Maryland Heights, MO. I sustained damage in excess of \$1000.00. If the driver would have exercised ordinary care loading and unloading my property I would not have had this damage. Along with the damage done to my personal belongings the driver expressed no concern or remorse for the damage and it took me contacting a consumer agency in St. Louis to get North American Van Lines to reimburse me.

In detail, the driver (Mr. Woody Avey) while unloading my car put the manual convertible top down without unzipping the back window. The back window cracked in half and tore the leather surrounding it. The same driver tore the door off of my entertainment system completely off, severed it's electrical cord and damaged another door so it will not close properly. The third article damaged was a drawing table. One of the legs of the base was bent completely in half. Also damaged were a couple of other items that were worth a small amount of money, so I didn't pursue their replacement costs.

Pursuing payment for the driver's negligence was no easy task. I submitted a claim to the local office who told me that I would have to resubmit the claim to their home office in Indiana to which I complied. A long time went by and no one had contacted me on the matter. Finally, I contacted a consumer agency in St. Louis who must have scared the

company into processing my claim,

Last month I received a letter from the Attorney General's office. I was pleased to have a opportunity to write you with my experience with this moving company. The Attorney General's office was one of the many I contacted in regards to this matter. After I received my check from North American I wrote them and told them my problem had been resolved, but I would sincerely hope they would keep the letter on file for future reference. I am very pleased that they did.

When I moved to California I used Dodge Mayflower to move my belongings. Nothing was damaged in the move. I believe **that their rule to hold the driver's accountable for damaged merchandise was incentive for my belongings to get there safe.** Additionally, it caused the driver to exercise extra concern when I thought one of my boxes was lost. If this rule was enforced on other drivers I am convinced there would be far less damage and at least ordinary care would be exercised by drivers and their assistants.

My next concern was how long it took the company to pay me. I submitted pictures of the damage, their own descriptive inventory (which indicated no damage prior to the move), their claim form and estimates for the damage. The claim should have been processed and paid promptly. There should have been no reason for a consumer agency to get involved.

The last complaint I have about the moving industry extended to both companies I used. After I paid my bill I was charged an additional amount for stairs they didn't expect to climb. Since I signed the agreement I agreed to pay the charges, however, common sense would indicate if an apartment is on the 3rd floor one would have to take stairs or an elevator. Elevators were available and the manager of the complex told me if the movers need the key for the elevator they were welcome to it, I notified the drivers. The driver and his assistants chose not to use the elevators since my apartment was closer to a stairwell on the side street. The estimates companies give should not include clauses giving them the right to charge extra for unforeseen circumstances. Their estimates are supposed to be based on their expertise in the moving industry and their consumers should not be charged for their mistakes'

I hope my long letter will assist you in deriving some new standards for this poorly regulated industry. I believe changes can be made, so the business is profitable for the companies as well as provide better service to their consumers.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me regarding my experience at 3 14-344-0298.

Thank you for your concern,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria L. Sherman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "V" and a long, sweeping underline.

Victoria L. Sherman
161 Edgeworth Avenue
Maryland Heights, MO 630432617

cc:Mr. Ron Bockenkamp